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THE CHARLESTOWN NAVAL SHIPYARD RE-USE STUDY

REPORT II - HISTORIC PARK PROPOSAL

Prepared by the Boston Redevelopment
Authority for the National Park Service

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The Charlestown Naval Shipyard, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places is of great architectural and historical importance to Boston and the Nation.

It is anticipated that within the next 5-10 years current Naval operations at Charlestown will be phased out in favor of building new facilities at South Boston. It is proposed that as this process occurs, approximately 24 of 83 land acres of the Naval Shipyard be converted to a National Historic Park. Included in this park would be a major Naval Museum, other special exhibits, a motel and recreational facilities for local residents and tourists. A substantial start on the project should be made in time for Boston's celebration of the American Revolutionary War Bicentennial in 1975-76.

CONTENTS

I. Introduction - Background, The Present, The Future

II. Summary of Proposal for Naval Shipyard Historic Park

III. Fact Sheet on Shipyard and Historic Park

IV. Illustrative Site Plan (reduced)

V. Appendices

Disposition of buildings in Historic Park Area - 1975

Preliminary cost estimates - Major items

CHARLESTOWN NAVAL SHIPYARD HISTORIC PARK PROPOSAL

I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Several months before the establishment of the U.S. Navy Department in the spring of 1797, a resolve from the Naval Committee of the House of Representatives recommended that an appropriation be made for the establishment of a government dock-yard. Three years later, in the spring of 1800, Secretary of the Navy, Benjamin Stoddard, proposed the purchase of land at Boston for such a purpose. Later that year, 43 acres of land and mudflats were purchased at Charlestown for a sum of $39,214. Included in the site of the new shipyard was the land known as "Moulton's Point", where the British troops had landed and formed for the assault in the famous 1775 Battle of Bunker Hill.

Among the ships constructed at the Naval Yard in subsequent years were the "Independence", considered to be "the finest and heaviest frig ate-built vessel of her time", and the first torpedo boat the "Intrepid". One of the most famous ships constructed at the yard was the "Merrimac", converted into an ironclad by Confederate forces during the Civil War and known for its encounter with the Union Ironclad "Monitor" at Hampton Roads. From the time of her first repairs in 1803, when her hull was covered with copper made by Paul Revere, the famous frigate "Constitution" has made the Naval Yard her home.

The Charlestown Naval Shipyard has also been the site of several unique facilities. The first "shiphouse" for building ships indoors was constructed here in 1813 and proved so successful that it was copied in other shipyards in this country and abroad. Drydock #1 is one of the two oldest drydocks in the country (both completed in 1833) and was first occupied by the Constitution. The 1,360 foot long ropewalk has provided most of the rope requirement of the Navy for the last 135 years.

Many of the structures at the shipyard are of architectural merit as well. The Commandants' House, dating from 1809, has been attributed by some to the work of master architect, Charles Bulfinch. Although this has not been clearly documented, the building is, at any rate, a good one and is well sited on a small knoll. More important architecturally are the very fine granite industrial buildings built in 1830's to 50's. Several of these have been attributed to Architect Alexander Parris, better known for his work on the Quincy Market complex in Boston.

THE PRESENT

Unfortunately, few residents of Boston or visitors to the City know anything of the historic and architectural values of the Charlestown Shipyard which caused it to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places. At best, the yard is recognized as the location of the Constitution. Yet the more than 600,000 people who visit the ship every year see little of the shipyard except a glimpse, through chain-link, of the ships and granite buildings. Their association with the shipyard is likely to be one of a confusing and dreary approach from

Charlestown's City Square to an unusually unattractive parking area under the Mystic Bridge and then a walk past some unprepossessing souvenir shops. Most visitors never see drydock #1 with the inscription of Andrew Jackson, the stately Commandants' House, the fine granite buildings, the ships that line the docks, or even the excellent views of the Boston skyline.

THE FUTURE

It is proposed that all this be changed, and that Boston's residents and visitors be provided with a totally new recreational, educational, and aesthetic experience through the creation of a major new National Historic Park at the Charlestown Naval Shipyard. Such a "park" could serve as the focus of the entire Freedom Trail, and provide visitor services not available at other sites. Elements of the proposal as it has been developed to date include:

- Designation of approximately 24 of the 83 land acres at the shipyard as a National Historic Site to be administered by the National Park Service or the Department of the Navy.
- A Major Naval Museum focussing on naval architecture and the illustrious history of the men and ships of the U.S. Navy, featuring in particular the ships built at Charlestown.
- An improved access system and unobtrusive parking areas.
- Multi-Media exhibits summarizing and relating the events of the Revolutionary War Period in an around Boston.
- A 300 room motel and rooftop restaurant oriented towards the excellent view of the Boston skyline.

- 15 acres of open space and waterfront park.
- A boat "parking" facility for approximately 75 boats.
- A water bus service connecting the historic park area with the North End terminus of the Freedom Trail and the Downtown Waterfront.
- (Eventually) a shopping area offering quality crafts and products.

As currently proposed, the historic park area would occupy about 1/3 of the total area of the Shipyard. The other 2/3 would be devoted to a variety of community-oriented uses following the removal of the Navy to its facilities at South Boston. Buildings of architectural or historical merit outside of the historic area would be protected through special preservation zoning under State Legislation.

II. SUMMARY OF MAJOR ELEMENTS

IMPROVED ACCESS & PARKING

1. Vehicular Access

The new Warren Avenue Dam and Bridge to be built by MDC and the Army Corps of Engineers is now in the final design stage, with a target date for completion in 1975. This facility, along with the Rutherford Avenue Extension to be built as part of the Charlestown Urban Renewal Project, will substantially improve automobile access from the Government Center, North End area, and the west. The existing tangle at City Square will be eliminated.

2. Parking

A permanent parking facility for 700 cars will be constructed underground in drydock #2. In the first stage of development, this will serve both tourists and navy employees working at the shipyard. Overflow parking for 400 cars during 1975 and 1976 will be provided in open lot areas which will later be used for new development. After the Navy has moved, the underground parking structure will serve the historic area, new shops and offices totalling 80,000 square feet, and a 300 boat marina.

3. Ground Transit Access

It is proposed that the existing bus route on Bunker Hill Street be altered so as to pass through the naval shipyard and terminate at Dock Square. During American Revolution Bicentennial Celebrations in 1975 and 1976, a special "proto-typical" transit system should be operating on the waterfront and the Freedom Trail circuit.

4. Water Access

The visual and actual distance from historic Copps Hill Cemetery and the North End Park to Pier 1 of the Charlestown Naval Shipyard is very brief - about 1,000 feet. Yet, the waslking distance between those two points is close to a mile. It is proposed that a seasonal "water bus" service be established connecting the North End Park, the shipyard park and the downtown waterfront. It is also proposed that a portion of the waterfront of the shipyard park be set aside for the use of visitors arriving by pleasure craft. There are now no facilities in Boston's Inner Harbor where a mariner can put in for an hour, a day, or a week. As boating increases, there will be an increased demand for facilities for short-term docking. The historic park at the shipyard will be an attraction to mariners, and the proximity of the site to the heart of the City also makes it appropriate for visitors arriving by boat. In the first stage of development, provision should be made for short term (up to 2 weeks) boat parking. Additional space should be provided later for a full scale marina.

EXHIBIT AREAS AND SUPPORT FACILITIES

1. Naval Museum

The primary focus of the Charlestown Naval Shipyard historic park should be a Museum of Naval Architecture and History. Exhibits should explore at least the following topics:

a. Naval architecture and technology - demonstrating principals of flotation, hydrodynamics, locomotion, and the development of ships reflecting an understanding of these concepts and the special requirements of ships of war.

b. The art of ship building - methods of ship construction including materials, equipment, time and skills required.

c. Exploration and navigation.

d. Related technology - development of secondary naval equipment (such as rope).

The history of the U.S. Navy should be explored but not in such a way as to duplicate facilities at the Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland. Emphasis should be placed on the changing duties and living conditions of ordinary men aboard ships rather than on heroes or on particular events of history.

A small special exhibit should be included which tells the history of the Boston Naval Shipyard at Charlestown and the boats which were built here. To demonstrate both the technological changes in naval architecture and the experience of the U.S. Navy, actual ships should wherever possible be restored and moored at piers 1 to 4 of the shipyard. Included would, of course, be the Constitution.

Although the downtown waterfront would be a more appropriate location for such a facility, the historic park might also include a museum telling of Boston's role as a seaport, and its participation in the China trade. The general topic of commercial shipping of various types, however, is the subject of several museums on the Eastern seaboard, including the very ambitious South Street Seaport project in New York.

2. Museum on the Revolutionary War Period

The Naval Shipyard is itself a Revolutionary War site. It is now and will continue to be the major attraction on the Freedom Trail. Furthermore, it has a considerable amount of space which is potentially available for purposes of historical commemoration. It, therefore, seems an appropriate location for a visitors center which can establish a context for the specific material on the Revolutionary War Period now scattered along Boston's Freedom Trail, and in museums and historic sites in Lexington, Concord and the region. The purpose of the center would be to show the relationship and sequence of events preceding, during and after the period of armed conflict in the Boston region. Emphasis should be on the general and interpretative rather than the specific. For this reason, films and topographic maps and models might consitute the bulk of the exhibit material.

3. Support Facilities

Support facilities should include, as a minimum, the administrative and curatorial offices of the National Park Service, an auditorium and library, restaurant, and quarters for the crews and honor guards of the Constitution and other historic ships at the site. In addition, space might be made available for the use of appropriate special purpose groups, such as local historical societies and the Boston Power Squadron.

OPEN SPACE

Approximately 15 acres of open space are proposed to be included in the Naval Shipyard historic park. Included in this total are several different types of areas. Surrounding the principal exhibit buildings and drydocks, and extending out over the piers where historic ships will be moored, would be hard surfaced areas on which items such as anchors, masts, figureheads, and other appropriate objects will be exhibited.

Other portions of the "park" would include sunken planting areas, wide green lawn, and heavily planted screening areas. Benches should be plentiful and tables ould be placed inconspicuously for family picnics.

MOTEL AND RESTAURANT

According to a recent survey of recreation, tourism, and vacationing in Eastern Massachusetts, 80% of the visitors to an area stated "historical sightseeing" or "museums" as the purpose of their visit. The Constitution drew over 700,000 visitors in 1969, and this number is expected to increase with the creation of a naval museum and other ancillary facilities. The addition of these facilities would also be likely to lengthen the average stay of the visitor to Boston.

Thus, the shipyard park would provide a ready-made attraction for a motel. Furthermore, the close proximity to the downtown and the accessibility to and from major highways to the north and west, puts this site in a favorable location for motel development.

It is, therefore, proposed that a 300 room motel be constructed in the vicinity of 1st Avenue and Bunker Hill Street. Included in the development might be a "penthouse" restaurant overlooking the historic ships nearby and the fine view of the Boston skyline.

FACT SHEET - PROPOSED CHARLESTOWN NAVAL SHIPYARD HISTORIC PARK

Total Area of Shipyard - 83 acres

Area of Proposed Historic Park - 24 acres

Exhibit Space and Support Facilities	2.4 acres
Open Space, including surface of drydock 2 and outdoor exhibit areas	14.4 acres
Motel and Commercial Space	1.5 acres
Temporary Parking (1975)	4.2 acres
Retained by Navy for Barracks (1975)	1.5 acres

Total Floor Area of Space to be Devoted to Exhibits and Support Facilities	196,800 sq.ft.
Total Floor Area of Parking Space for 1975 (including Permanent and Temporary facilities but not Motel parking)	466,300 (ca 1200 cars)

V. Appendices

Disposition of buildings in Historic Park Area - 1975

Preliminary cost estimates - Major items

HISTORIC PARK AREA - 1975

Building No.	Date of Construction	Type of Construction	Sq. ft. of Floor Space	Present Use	Proposed Disposition	Estim. Cost	Comments
4,5	Begun 1799	Brick	ca 40,500	Officers Club	Rehab. for support facility	$405,000	The oldest building in the shipyard.
265	1833	Brick	18,000	Officers Housing	Retain existing use or use as support facility for the prologue year.	Undetermined but minimal	This should be used for housing after 1975.
G.	1809	Brick	6,000	Commandants House	Open up to tours	Undetermined	Possibly designed by Bulfinch
21	1840	Brick	1,200	Carriage House	Retain for future use	- -	
I.	1823	Brick	36,800	Marine Barracks	Retain use in 1975	- -	This should be converted into a youth hostel when Navy moves.
136	Unknown	Brick	10,800	Admin., Enlisted Men's Club	Retain for Navy use in 1975	- -	Demolish when Navy moves
31	1852	Brick	2,700	Telephone Exchange	Rehab for support facility perhaps library	$ 13,500	
120	Unknown	Brick	18,200	Dispensary	Demolish for Bunker Hill Street extension	$ 10,900	
32	1857	Brick	3,900	Bank	Retain for bank	- -	
198	WW II	Frame	67,500	Electronics Equipment Admin.	Demolish	$ 40,500	

Building No.	Date of Construction	Type of Construction	Sq. ft. of Floor Space	Present Use	Proposed Disposition	Estim. Cost	Comments
22	1832	Granite and frame	27,600	Woodworking shop, lab, others	Rehab 19,200 sq. ft. for exhibit space, demolish rest	$288,000 Rehab $5,000 Demolition	Possibly designed by Parris
24	1847	Granite and Frame	85,800	Riggers shop and Docking Office	Rehab 45,000 sq. ft. granite portion for exhibit space, demolish rest	$675,000 Rehab $24,500 Demolition	
26	1850	Brick	7,600	Reference Standards Lab	Rehab for exhibit or support	$76,000	
125	Unknown	Brick	11,200	Paint shop and Sub. Station	Rehab for exhibit or support	$168,000	
10	1852	Brick	5,600	Ship repair space (inactive)	Rehab for support facility	$84,000	
58	1836	Granite	ca133,000	Ropewalk	Demolish one portion for Bunker Hill St. extension, retain ropewalk, rehab Lower floor for exhibits (65,000 sq. ft.)	$27,000 Demolition $97,500 Rehab	May be by Parris. Supplied all rope for Naval vessels for many years.
					Total Rehab.	$1,807,000	
					Total Demolition	$ 107,900	
					TOTAL:	$1,914,900	

Revised 12/9/70

PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATES
CHARLESTOWN NAVAL SHIPYARD HISTORIC PARK
MAJOR ITEMS

COSTS DIRECTLY RELATED TO CHARLESTOWN HISTORIC PARK

Land Acquisition

Demolition of Existing Buildings

Bldg. 120	182,000	cf	@	.06/cf	=	$10,900	
Bldg. 198	675,000	cf	@	.06/cf	=	40,500	
Part of Bldg. 22	84,000	cf	@	06/cf	=	5,000	
Part of Bldg. 24	408,000	cf	@	06/cf	=	24,500	
Part of Bldg. 58	450,000	cf	@	06/cf	=	27,000	
	1,789,000	cf				$107,900	(National Park Service)

Rehabilitation of Existing Buildings

Bldg. 4,5	31,500	sf	@	$10/sf	=	$315,000	
Bldg. 31	2,700	sf	@	$15/sf	=	40,500	
Bldg. 22	19,200	sf	@	$15/sf	=	288,000	
Bldg. 24	45,000	sf	@	$15/sf	=	675,000	
Bldg. 28	7,600	sf	@	$10/sf	=	76,000	
Bldg. 125	11,700	sf	@	$15/sf	=	175,500	
Bldg. 10	5,600	sf	@	$15/sf	=	84,000	
	123,300	sf				$1,654,000	
Bldg. 58	65,000	sf	@	$15/sf	=	975,000	
	188,300	sf				$2,629,000	(National Park Service)

PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATES
CHARLESTOWN NAVAL SHIPYARD HISTORIC PARK
MAJOR ITEMS

Parking Facilities			
700 Cars @ $2,000/car	=	$1,400,000	(National Park Service or City of Boston)
400 Cars @ 400/car	=	$ 160,000	
		$1,560,000	
Marina			
100 Slips @ $6,600 /slip		$ 660,000	
Development of 15 Acres Of Open Space			
653,000 sf @ $5.00/sf	=	$3,265,000	(National Park Service)
Bunker Hill Street Extension			
230 lf @ $180/lf	=	$ 41,400	(City of Boston)
Development of Motel And Restaurant		(Private)	
Undetermined			
Museum Content			
149,000 sf @ $50/sf	=	$7,450,000	(National Park Service)
Period Ships		Undetermined	(Navy)

COSTS INDIRECTLY RELATED TO HISTORIC PARK

Underwriting of Water Bus Service

Extension of MBTA Bus Route

Completion of Charles River Dam

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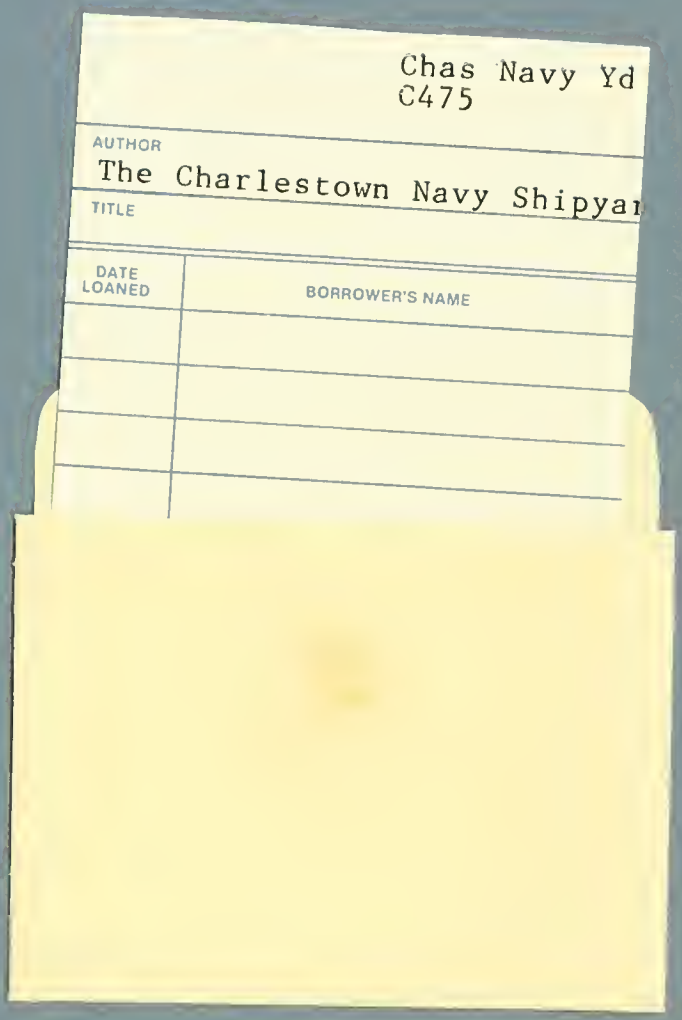
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